

Eastern narrative components in a new traditionalist Turkish prose

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Abstract

In fiction there are two types of narration: classic narration and structural narration. In the first type the participation of the narrator is expected in the narration. In the second type of narration, the described talk is determined in accordance with the development of the events and situations within time and place. With creativity of the above-mentioned writers a new literary – aesthetic tendency based on traditional topics, historical events and personalities and classic narration tradition with participation of modern expression technique and narration styles, as well as the prose samples rich with completely new images and polyphonic narration style is formed. In the XX century, the Turkish prose which benefited mostly from the Western aesthetics since the 80-90th years began to turn back to rich eastern poetry traditions without denying modernist practice.

Key words: narration, prose, tradition, modernism, poetry

The literary theorists talk on a language, a narrator, a text, an expression style, a narration style and other such kind of components forming a narration in an artistic text. 2 The most important of these components is, of course, the language, because narration, story, em-

bodiment and incarnation of any artistic text within a concrete plot and composition is manifested in a text form in an oral or written speech act realized through a language.

Another component of narration is a subject realizing this act, i.e. is the narra-

tor himself. In a fiction we meet the narrator in several forms:

a) the narrator is the author himself. The narration of the text plot is realized by the I person, the author himself carries out the role of the narrator;

b) the narrator is a subject fabricated by the writer, a product of writer's imagination or prototype of a person in a real life. In both cases the plot of the text is narrated by the III person;

c) finally, the entire text is narrated within a certain plot-composition construction from the name of the images in the fiction, in other words, each of heroes narrates a bit, from his own viewpoint, in his expression style.

Of course, it also should be kept in mind that there are cases when all three narration forms are used.

The third important component of narration is the plot of the event, in a broad sense, the plot of the text, the content of the work. Appropriate narration style in the fiction is distinguished according to a literary type and genre. In other words, the literary type and genre changing due to form and shape of narration is represented as one of the components forming narration. It is known that an artistic text in a narration is man-

ifested in two plans: at) in context plan (ontological plan) – narrated, told story, event; b) in expression plan (epistemological plan) – comprehension of the context, its reflection, expression form, i.e. the form of narration of the text, the narration itself.

According to the above mentioned diachronic fact, it is found out whether the narration is a product of fantasy or reality, as well as whether the narrator is a real concrete person, or a fabricated abstract person. Of course, here one should remember the third plan (axial plan)- the relations between the author and the reader manifested within universally accepted values. The significant points are the issues related with target of the work, the methods and techniques that the author uses in an artistic text. That is the information that the author gives to the reader whether he is the same person with the narrator or not.

Similarity and difference, abstractness (imaginary) and concreteness (real-life), diachronic or synchronic time and place relations in narration of events between the narrator and the author in eastern narrative art are realized in various ways. Sometimes the real author is

hidden using “text within the text” and “framed prose” methods and the frame referring to traditional story (to narrate independent stories within a story). Sometimes in order to make the reader believe in real or imaginary character of events, the author unexpectedly comes into vision saying “I am here”. Or he diverges from imitation (mimesis) which is a traditional method of reflecting real life preferring method of isolation – metaphysic way of expression, subliminal narration method, the shape of flow of thoughts, type of narration permitting to narrate the same event from different angles and perspectives. Being the most characteristic peculiarity of the Turkish prose of the 80-90s, this latest narration method is considered one of the common forms of creating artistic texts among the leading representatives of this prose.

In all cases, it should not be forgotten that the narrator is not exactly the author himself. In an artistic text the author mostly hides himself, his “I”, and gives a freedom to the narrator. The author charges the narrator to narrate the peculiarities he wants to see in his images and heroes. So, the author transfers his outlook, life philosophy, speaking manner, vision to the event, etc. to the

narrator. Because although the narrator is a positive hero of the story and narrates from the name of the I person (himself), no writer wants his reader to identify him with the narrator, or in other words, with his heroes. He does not emerge in a fiction openly. The idea of the author is solved by the heroes of the story in accordance with aesthetic plot the writer built up and within the framework of the compositions relevant to its implementation. Here we come across an interesting fact. As we stated above at the end of the XX century when a new type Turkish prose was formed, from time to time the writers showed themselves in artistic texts with the styles derived from traditional Eastern narration, helped the reader to conclude a moral from the story. Sometimes the aim in writing the story is revealed within the text directly in the replicas. In a text they used to give advice clearly addressed to the reader in connection with the events and stories. For example, Ahmad Midhad (1844-1912) who is one of the founders of such type of stories and novels often uses such kind of methods, tells to his readers that the events happening in the story are real, or stresses out that he wonders about the fate of one of the heroes, explains

moral significance of the story, gives recommendations about reasons and results of the events, often gives “a part from a story” as in tales, folk stories and masnavis.

The tracks of traditional prose can be seen in the creativity of the youngest writer of “Tanzimat” literature, the founder of short realist stories in Turkish literature Sami Pashazade Sezai (1859-1936) who made Turkish stories close to western novels with his collection of stories named “Little things” (1892). For his works laudatory narrative style with vivid folk colloquial language of the images mixed up with the phrases, metaphors and analogies in Persian taken from divan literature is characterized. As we stated above, though from the end of the XIX century until the 80s years of the previous century the eastern narration had been addressed in stories and novels of the writers referring to all possible “ism”s belonging to Western modernism (critical realism, social realism, romanticism, symbolism, modernism, postmodernism etc.), it was namely the writers of the 80s years who made it to structural attribute of their works and used them deliberately. The matter is a new literary gen-

eration formed in the 80s years and to which Iskandar Pala and Elif Shafak joined in the 90s, besides benefiting from techniques and forms of modernism and postmodernism, began more often to address to classic narration traditions, to synthesize old eastern and modern western narrations, and to compose the stories and novels different from those existing in Turkish literature previously.

The efforts of these masters to form a different way of thinking unlike the usual canonical literary concept based on anthropological rationalist approach and to reflect inner world of a man in dark colors, using metaphysic elements, irrationalism, inner dialogue, monologue and other literary techniques to reveal the characters of the images in their novel by preferring abstraction and reflection (isolation) method to concretizing method imitating objective reality (mimesis) led to formation of an entirely new Turkish prose.

These masters who paid more attention to how to describe rather than what to describe besides ideological context also gave a special significance to form innovations of the work. Of course, here one important point should be noted

that with such convergence style they, to a certain extent, deliberately moved away from current social-political issues. And it was the result of the environment created by important military-political events, the burden that the time put on their shoulders starting a new era in social-cultural life of Turkey.

It is known that military coups, non-stable and short-term governments took place in Turkey on May, 24, 1960, March, 12, 1971 and September, 12, 1980 on one hand was a change towards a new democratic movement and public opinion, on another hand caused a retard in the country on the background of economic progress of developing countries, even a regress in some fields and it led a part of the educated people, including people-of-art to depression, and involved another part unwillingly to political-ideological struggles among the parties, as well as to the problems of brother massacre and terror on ethnic and national basis. At the same time the writers faced a lot of philosophical and aesthetic concepts seizing the literary world and had to choose rational ones out of these concepts. So, a new social – political condition established in the country, as well as the struggle that the writers made for the relation of the liter-

ature and the life significantly influenced on the development of the prose and gave a rise to establishment of literature and ideological groups among the writers. In such a condition “new traditionalists” from rationalism turned to irrationalism, from reality to fantasy, from daily household concerns (from what is material) to literary concerns (what is spiritual). It is not accidental that at the result of the contradictory political-social condition of the country this literary generation withdrew to itself for a certain period. But soon these writers gathering their forces and not wanting to put up with the situation they had fallen into wanted to reflect this situation in an objective way and started new literary searches (the second name of the generation of new traditionalists is “a period of new searches” derives from here). Besides literary and artistic types and genres, explanation and expression styles of national Turkish prose, they were also interested in literary novelties of West and began to apply in their works their synthesis with traditional ones. The most obvious differences of “traditionalists” from the modernists arise namely at this point. The matter is while characterizing the works of modernists Sharif Aktash says

that they are not something more than “a group of images and events expressed in a form borrowed from West and narrated in Turkish language”. According to him, theoretical basis of these genres had been prepared and developed not in Turkish literary ground, but in the West. In other words, modernist artists borrowing the new form from the West did not bother themselves with thinking theoretical conceptions continuing taking ready theoretical knowledge with known frame and peculiarities. So, modern literary samples in Turkish prose have been determined with Western mind in Western culture and formed at the result of application of the peculiarities of tested genres to local material (content). New modern story and novel were put forward at the result of the efforts of re-shaping the old form of the West with a local material and narrating it within the possibilities of the Turkish language.

The concepts “innovator” and “traditionalist” on the first glance seem denying and contradicting each other. Actually, it is not like that, because, here when we say “traditionalist” we do not mean blind devotion to old traditions or with “innovators” we do not mean

those who deny all that is old ignoring cultural – ethic lifestyle and behavior norms which have been passed from generation to generation throughout centuries and which have the power of “law” although not being written. On the contrary, innovators want to protect and preserve the customs (e.g. to go to one another’s houses to congratulate with a holiday, to welcome and see off a guest, hand kissing, ceremonies of engagement, wedding and funeral, etc. and other everyday lifestyle), traditions and values (ceremonies and rituals of national, historical and religious character) enriching them by adding new, fixed moral-spiritual values of the modern society meeting the requirements of the new time and derived from social orders, to express all these in an artistic and aesthetic way by means of literary and art works and to present it to the reader (*Sherif Aktash., 1984, N:124, p.75*)

In all cases, “traditionalists” although being far from social-political issues, and working individually with the principle “everything in the art is private and intimate”, they make great contributions in development of Turkish prose, in structure, language and style

of a story and novel, and in innovation of aesthetics entirely.

Turkish prose of the 80-90s years from the aspect of its technical capabilities, artistic characteristics and artistic - aesthetic peculiarities can be characterized as a new stage of great quality changes. In the best samples of new traditionalist prose the new obtained are synthesized with traditional ones and at the result a completely new artistic-aesthetic style emerges. In other words, new traditionalist prose clearly stresses out that it is the continuation of a traditionalist story, puts forward an idea of joining modern artistic-aesthetic value and principles of the West with wise, edifying, simple-style narration methods of the East. Majority of new traditionalist conservative masters attempted to create a perfect style joining all they that they had learnt both from East classics and advanced West authors of that time. They try to avoid express the social-political problems within a standard thinking pattern and consider aesthetic aspects of the literature as important as the theme and ideological-contextual issues of it. Their works are pieces of art focusing on the world of individuals, interpersonal relations and trying to describe the world from the objective of

their inner worlds and of course, thinking and making think about narration forms as style-form-structure.

New traditional prose should be distinguished from the literary trends and tendencies as traditional, historical and Islamic prose having more than hundred years history in Turkish literature and which has much common peculiarities with it. The main common characteristics of artistic creativity, especially novels of traditional Turkish prose and its leading representatives, first of all, are related with commitment to social values, romantic style, historical past and lifestyle, as well as the elements born from religious beliefs transferred to artistic texts.

In this type of works the construction based on a classic plot-composition of events, an aesthetic presentation in accordance with the tendencies of the period, a composition intended for putting ahead the point which is desired to be conveyed to the reader prevails. In traditional-type novels a historical – chronological sequence in yesterday-today-tomorrow form is usually observed. The writers in their works mostly lean on divine viewpoint and at this time aesthetic concept is directed by spiritual- ethical values. Choice of the

theme and the quality of their ideological content feeds from national and Islamic values. The writers make their heroes speak mostly in local dialects and accents. Of course, as the common peculiarities stated above can be in a single work separately, it is possible to speak also about existence of artistic texts in a form of national-historical, Islamic-historical, national-Islamic-historical synthesis.

The first samples of traditional narrative story in Turkish prose emerged at the end of the XIX and at the beginning of the XX centuries. For example, the plots of both Mehmet (Mizanji) Murad's (1854-1917) novel "In Turpan or turpa?" (1891), and Khalida Adib's novel "New Turan" (1912) are based on national utopias. Both novels were written with the goal to enlighten the people against the danger of decline and elimination of the values as religion, language, morals and traditions on the background of new reforms and new social-political environment caused by europization and westernism. But there is an important difference between these above mentioned novels: in the first one the necessity of Islam unity (the images Mansur and Zahra represent Islam in

the novel), in the second one importance (extremely idealized Oghuz and Kaya loyal to their national values) of the idea of nationalism-Turkism (attention to the name of the novel "New Turan") are stressed out. Safiya Erol (1900-1964) who is one of the followers of the first tendency, besides spirituality-materiality, village-city, Istanbul-Anatolia dilemma and comparisons, demonstrates loyalty to the tradition with her novels related with the themes of love for the nation and homeland, with the plot-composition construction opposing Eastern and Western cultures and looks at Islamic values through heart and soul window and morality prism. Since her first novel "The novel of Kadikoy" (1938) East and West cultures are compared, Sufi thoughts and wise sayings are put forward in the talks and inner monologues of wealthy aristocratic society of Istanbul's Bosphorus coast and the heroes chosen out of simple representatives of the people.

In the novel "Storm of Ulker" (1938) two different cultures are opposed in the faces of Nuran, a fan and singer of Western music and Sermet, a fan and singer of Eastern music. On social-political and cultural background of the

30s years, the writer puts forward such an interesting thought that the time is not favorable for sole development of Turkish music in isolation from the world musical culture and so, it is inevitable that Sermet will lose (will be exhausted). The time and condition are favorable for Nuran. He chooses the right path and he manages to transfer the songs of classic Eastern composers which have been convicted to be forgotten into notes as in the West and creates new works benefiting from the synthesis of both music.

In the novel "Jiyardalan" (1947) developed Western world is described. Spiritual progress of Turkish nation and Sufi philosophy standing on the basis of this progress is put against comprehensive material development of the West. People's love for the native land, the feeling of pride for their glorious history joins the feelings and thoughts coming from religious and Sufi wisdom. The events happening in Hungarian geography, Turkish provinces, heavy cavalry divisions (sipahis), clergy, brave men, beautiful girls, fights, lifestyle and household of ordinary people are described in an epic way here.

Regarding Turkish historical novels, according to common and similar pecu-

liarities of this genre, these works can be classified into popular historic novels, modern historic novels, postmodern historic novels and new traditionalist historic novels from the point of view of structure and context. In popular style historic novels form and aesthetic elements are weak, the events and historic personalities which are of interest of the readers are described in a simple language without detailed and long analysis. Here the power of imagination and narrating events in an exaggerated way for impressing the reader is the main. Sometimes an adventure or a story continues in several novels in the form of a chain. The aim in such stories is to gain as many readers as possible. Such kind of novels rise interest of the society, especially the youth, for history. But the novels of this style although being read with enthusiasm in the period they have been written, are forgotten after some time as they do not have a high artistic-aesthetic value.⁵

Ahmad Midhad's "Yenicharis" (1871), "Arnavuts-Solyots" (1888), "Young Turks" (1910) "Hasan Mallah" (1875), "Suleyman Musi" (1877), Namik Kamal's (1840-1888) "Jezmi" (1880), Fazli Najib's (1863-1932) three-volumed "In the horrors" (1910), Filibeli Ahmed

Hilmi's (1865-1914) "Orphan Turgut" (1910) etc. are considered the first samples of such kind of historical novels. It is possible to meet such kind of popular Turkish historical novels in all periods of Turkish literature (for example, Murat Sartoghlu's (1911-1989) "Battal Gazi", "Battal Gazi's son", Oghuz Ozdash's (1920-1979) "Garapanja", "Garapanja in Estergon", "Garapanja's revenge", Yavuz Bahadiroghlu's (1945) "Farewell to Bukhara", Ahmet Yilmaz Boyunagha's (1935) "Broken dagger", Teoman Argul's (1937) "Salim and Nurbanu", etc.).

In modern historical novels the events and historical personalities from the past are described paying attention to form and aesthetic beauty and ideological-contextual deepness. Behavior, actions and dialogues of historical personalities and the heroes of the novel which are products of imagination, historical events and stories are enlightened on the basis of the social-political environment and psychological and sociological analyses. Besides it, historical facts and events and objective reality are analyzed and explained from today's prism (Samiha Ayverdi's (1905-1993) "Imam of Mesihpasha", "A human and

a devil", Kamal Tahir's (1910-1973) "Mother state", "The people of captive city", Tarik Bughra's (1918-1994) "Little Agha", "Osmanjig", "Atilla Ilhan's (1925-2005) "The meal of wolves", Mustafa Nejati Sabatchioghlu's (1930-2006) "The lock", Amina Ishinsu's (1935) "White lands", Sevinj Chokum's (1943) "While seeing the half-moon", etc.) (M.Kutlu).

In 1980-2000 years the purpose of the new traditionalist masters (Rasim Ozdanoren (1940), Mustafa Kutlu (1947), Huseyn Su (1952), Ramazan Dikmen (1956-1997), Nazan Bekiroghlu (1957), Iskender Pala (1958), Jihan Aktash (1960), Nalan Barbarosoghlu (1961), Jamal Shakar (1962), Fatma Karabiyik Barbarosoghlu (1962), Sadik Yalsizuchanlar (1962), Sibel Eraslan (1967), Elif Shafak (1971), Munire Danish (1972) and others) addressing to classic Eastern tradition and Sufi philosophy standing on the basis of this tradition and giving a great place to the past and classic narration was to illuminate today by means of edifying historical events and prominent personalities of that time and to enlighten the youth and grow them up in this spirit. At the same time such new artistic style and tech-

niques was a successful effort to revive traditional Eastern poetry which was gradually forgotten. From this point of view it is expedient to research the creativity of new traditionalist writers not only by theoretical-aesthetic criteria and categories of modern literature criticism, but also by clarifying the essence of the above mentioned mission. Another kind of approach does not justify it from theoretical point of view, and in practice also makes difficult the research of creativity of new traditionalists and analyses of their works. In other words, to analyze the modern prose samples based on traditional Eastern narration in accordance with the theoretical-aesthetic criteria appropriate to typological essence of the literature of such type is the most correct way. Artistic –aesthetic styles and methods of classic Eastern narration, these works born from the synthesis of the poetry texts and the most modern forms of the modern world prose needs an approach and research on the basis of theoretical principle and categories adequate to them. First of all, it means explanation of “isolation” of the East, “mimesis” and “diegezis”, literary-philosophical and aesthetic concepts of the West and clarification of their mutu-

al relations in new traditionalist prose (6).

New traditionalists aimed to raise the nation’s mood, to return its self-confidence, to shake the memory of the people and to develop the feeling of pride for its past and roots. A new, not material, but spiritual-metaphysic approach to historical events and personalities, fragmental presentation of history, romantic marvel, polyphonic interpretation of partial monotonous narration style of the Middle Ages to the requirements of the new era, referring to Sufi philosophy, synthesis of this tradition and philosophy with the most advanced conceptions of the modern world prose also served namely to this mission.

Sometimes those who call new traditionalists conservative writers claim that they are far from social-political issues in their creativity and as a theme highlight only individual feelings and issues. However, majority of these writers in their works make the object of analysis the social-welfare concerns, problems in culture and education fields and the topics involving universal and national feelings in which the people are interested in.

In the best samples of modern traditionalist prose a great contribution is

made in total renewal and development of the aesthetics of modernist Turkish prose by using classic narration and completely new literary method and techniques, enriching the structure of modern Turkish story and novel by means of conducting synthesis of the

Eastern poetry and the Western aesthetics, creating unique artistic conflicts and characters, installation of many-branched plot and composition, joining the folklore language and style with the possibilities of the academic language.

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